

... Exit Richard Helms

✓ It isn't official yet, but our usually impeccable official sources tell us that Richard M. Helms will soon be stepping down after six years as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, presumably to take on a new and important assignment in the Nixon administration. Whatever his future job may be, he will be sorely missed in the one which he is leaving.

✓ Of the men who have headed the CIA since its inception in 1947, Helms stands out as the one truly professional intelligence expert. His career in the spy business covers a span of 29 years, beginning with a four-year stint with the Office of Strategic Services in World War II. After transferring to the newly-formed CIA, he served as deputy director for plans under General Walter Bedell Smith and John A. McCone, previous CIA heads.

✓ As director, Helms brought a coolness of judgment and great administrative talent to one of the most sensitive and difficult jobs in the federal government. Under his leadership, the performance of the agency, in contrast to past years,

has been highly discreet and, to the extent that such things can be judged, effective. It is suggested that his departure from the CIA may have resulted in part from a dispute within the intelligence community regarding the deployment of Russian nuclear missiles. Yet from all the available evidence, his assessment of the world situation — and particularly in Indochina, where the CIA has borne heavy responsibilities — has been remarkably accurate.

✓ The highly essential business of intelligence-gathering, being necessarily secret and to some minds distasteful, requires the kind of public confidence that Helms has been able to provide. As President Johnson remarked at his swearing-in ceremony: "Although he has spent more than 20 years in public life attempting to avoid publicity, he has never been able to conceal the fact that he is one of the most trusted and most able and most dedicated professional career men in this Capital." As director of the CIA, Richard Helms has fully justified that assessment.

STATOTHR

28 SEP 1971

Letters to the Editor

Radio Free Europe

STATOTHR

SIR: In the recent debate in the United States Senate over the future and status of Radio Free Europe Senator Fulbright expressed the view that the United States should close down this radio and expand cultural exchanges instead.

These two activities are ultimately serving the same goal in entirely different ways; they should never be contrasted.

I was head of the Department of Cultural Exchanges in the Polish Foreign Office from 1960 to 1963. From the other side of the negotiating table I could see how hard and often without success the American diplomats had to fight for each award of a scholarship (including scholarships under Fulbright's bill) or permission for an American ensemble to visit Poland. It must be remembered that, of necessity, cultural exchanges may embrace only a limited number of people and are subject to control, consent and restrictions of the respective government which may discontinue them at will when they cease to serve its own interests. Foreign broadcasts are the only line of direct communication with millions of people in the Soviet bloc countries which is entirely independent of censorship and influence of the authorities.

As member of the collective leadership in the Polish Foreign Office and a close associate of the late Adam Rapacki, minister of foreign affairs and a Politburo member, I had an opportunity to observe from inside the impact of Radio Free Europe on the ruling elite. I can state that literally everybody in this inner circle of power, including Gomulka himself, was assiduously following Radio Free Europe broadcasts. Ministers used to start their working day by reading monitoring bulletins of RFE broadcasts. My own habit became so deeply rooted that when I became an exile in 1963, I sold some of my few remaining valuables to buy a good radio set in order to listen in on Radio Free Europe. Even abroad only from this radio station could I learn what was going on in my country.

Few people in the West realize how anxious the rulers in the totalitarian system are to learn the authentic views of the opposition whose freedom of expression they themselves have suppressed. To some extent Radio Free Europe has become the voice of the silent opposition. It plays this role in a responsible, sometimes even overcautious, manner. RFE news and commentaries are topics of daily discussions at all levels including the members of Central Committee of the Communist Party and the governmental offices. Communist leaders who have become prisoners of their own monopoly of information need this radio for their own private enlightenment, but at the same time fear its impact on others.

It is this deep concern over the growing influence of Radio Free Europe, not merely on the population but above all on the Communist Party itself, that has finally prevailed. A few months before Rapacki and I left the foreign office, decisions were taken at the top level in Warsaw to use all available diplomatic as well as secret channels to bring about the closure of Radio Free Europe. Considerable resources were earmarked for this purpose and plans for this operation were already made three years ago with Washington and Bonn as the main targets of the diplomatic pressure.

The day when this goal will have been achieved will be a dark one for all those members of the Communist establishment who, like myself, have never lost hope that the system may become more humane and tolerant.

Henryk Birecki.

Antony, France.

30 MAR 1972

Letters to the Editor

'The Orange Card'

STATOTHR

SIR: The gratuitous criticism in your March 25 editorial with respect to my position on Northern Ireland ignores an obvious fact. The new peace initiative announced last week by Prime Minister Heath coincides almost precisely with two of the most important provisions in the resolution I introduced in Congress last October with Senator Abe Ribicoff and Congressman Hugh Carey—the promised phase-out of internment, and the institution of direct rule of Ulster from Westminster.

My only real regret is that the initiative was so long delayed in coming, and that so many innocent lives were lost before Britain decided to act. All of us hope and pray that the new policy will be successful in halting the killing and violence. Simple humanity requires us to continue to speak out to insure the earliest possible end to the tragedy.

One other point should be made about your editorial. Anyone familiar with Ulster history must wince at the obvious blunder in your use of the famous expression "Playing the Orange Card" to describe Prime Minister Heath's initiative. Lord Randolph Churchill coined the phrase in the 1880s and played the card in opposition to Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. As Churchill wrote to Lord Justice Fitzgibbon in 1886:

"I decided some time ago that if the GOM (Grand Old Man, Gladstone) went for Home Rule, the Orange Card would be the one to play. Please God, it may turn out the ace of trumps and not the two."

Ever since, the phrase has been used to denote attempts to stir up the Orange Order in Ulster and other Protestant opposition to British policy. The phrase can hardly be used to describe a progressive British initiative. For nearly a hundred years, British policy toward Ireland has been paralyzed by fear of the abominable Orange Card. Now, Prime Minister Heath has faced the challenge, and for that he deserves great credit.

Edward M. Kennedy,
U.S. Senator.

Radio Free Europe

SIR: Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are very important means of communication with the captive nations in Eastern Europe. People behind the Iron Curtain deserve hearing news and information from the Free World. Any dollar we spend for this cause is worth it from the humanitarian point of view. If present conditions are such that we cannot help them otherwise, the least we can do is to extend them unbiased information.

I oppose Sen. J.W. Fulbright's attempt to discontinue funds for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Closing of these broadcasts would be a service to the international communism.

John B. Genys,
President, Lithuanian-American Community of Greater Washington.